

# The Special Language of Encouragement

When comments about children's efforts are in order, we must be very careful not to place value judgments on what they have done. Too often, we make positive comments in a praising manner. Such comments express our values and opinions, rather than help children believe in themselves.

Be alert to eliminate value-loaded words from your vocabulary at these moments (for example, good, great, excellent, etc.). Substitute words of praise with phrases which express the special meaning of encouragement:

## Phrases that demonstrate acceptance:

- "I like the way you handled that."
- "I like the way you tackle a problem."
- "I'm glad you enjoy learning."
- "I'm glad you're pleased with it."
- "Since you're not-satisfied, what do you think you can do so that you will be pleased with it?"
- "It looks as if you enjoyed that."
- "How do you feel about it?"

## Phrases that show confidence:

- "Knowing you, I'm sure you'll do fine."
- "You'll make it!"
- "I have confidence in your judgment."
- "That's a rough one, but I'm sure you'll work it out."
- "You'll figure it out."

## Phrases that focus on contributions, assets, and appreciation:

- "Thanks; that helped a lot."
- "It was thoughtful of you to \_\_\_\_\_."
- "Thanks, I really appreciate \_\_\_\_\_, because it makes my job much easier."
- "I need your help on \_\_\_\_\_."
- To a family group: "I really enjoyed today. Thanks."
- "You have skill in \_\_\_\_\_. Would you do that for the family?"

## Phrases that recognize effort and improvement:

- "It looks as if you really worked hard on that."
- "It looks as if you spent a lot of time thinking that through."
- "I see that you're moving along."
- "Look at the progress you've made."  
(be specific; tell how)
- "You're improving in . . . . . ." (be specific)
- "You may not feel that you've reached your goal, but look how far you've come!"

*Submitted by Aiece Lyon*

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